

The Status Report

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87th Annual Women's Equality Day Observed on August 26th

On August 26th, people across the country celebrated "Women's Equality Day" a designation established in 1971 by the United States Congress, at the behest of Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY), to commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

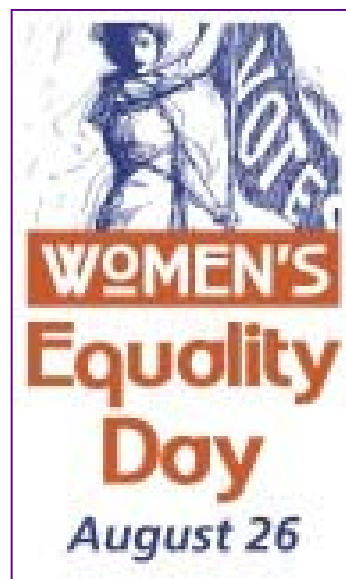
This year's celebration was the 87th anniversary of women's suffrage. While women finally being granted the right to vote was the main reason for the establishment of Women's Equality Day, August 26th also reminds us of the continued efforts of women toward full equality.

As the date fell on a weekend, no formal observance of the day was planned. However, in years past the Commission has celebrated Women's Equality Day with various programs focused on the need for women to achieve equality and encouraging the women of Massachusetts to register to vote and to actively participate in local and state politics.

To further these efforts, MCSW intern Rachel Caris (Brown University) spent the summer months developing a voter's guidebook and a proposal for engaging young women in the voting process. The purpose of this project is to demystify the voting process and get more women to the polls.

In acknowledgement of this historic holiday, organizations such as the American Association of University Women encouraged people to write a letter to the editor of their local newspaper to remind readers about the importance of the passage of the 19th Amendment and exercising your own right to vote.

The National Women's History Project website (www.nwhp.org) is a great source of information regarding this and other national celebrations of the achievements of women.



*Image courtesy of the
[National Women's History Project](http://www.nwhp.org).*



Rep. Bella Savitsky Abzug (D-NY) was a well-known American political figure and a leader of the women's movement. She famously said, "This woman's place is in the House - the House of Representatives," in her successful 1970 campaign to join that body.

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

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Executive Director's Corner

Sunday was a lovely summer day. In Massachusetts and throughout the nation women went about their normal activities of going to church, taking care of family, shopping, getting together with friends, or if they were lucky, enjoyed vacation or time at the beach, on the golf course, climbing mountains, reading, etc. I wonder how many paused, even for an instant, to recognize the historical significance of the day for women.

For Sunday, August 26, was the 87th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women — after a long and hard struggle — the right to vote. This date in 1920 was the culmination of a massive, peaceful civil rights movement by women that had its formal beginnings in 1848 at the world's first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. As gender equity is still very much an issue today, Women's Equality Day is an important time to remember that our votes are a vital tool for creating change and shaping the policy issues that women care about.

Too many women are not exercising their hard-earned constitutional right. According to the U.S. Census bureau, in 2000, some 30 percent of eligible women - over 50 million, married and unmarried - were not registered to vote. And registering is only half the battle. Over 22 million registered unmarried women did not vote in the last election.

Voting statistics among all women can and must be improved. Women comprise 52 percent of the population of Massachusetts. With this majority vote we COULD and CAN influence the direction of critical policies important to us -- like economic self sufficiency, health and child care, personal safety, a healthy environment and electing more women to public office.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Register

Educate

Vote

If you're not already registered, visit www.rockthevote.org to register to vote today!

Learn more about where to vote and what to expect by visiting www.massvote.org.

Voting is simple and poll workers are there to help you. You can see a brief informational video at www.votinginfo.info.

For in the words of Alice Paul, one of the leading figures responsible for the passage of the 19th Amendment, "When you put your hand to the plow, you can't put it down until you get to the end of the row." We have many more fields to go.

Linda Brantley
Executive Director, MCSW

Commissioner Corner: Welcome Madhu Sridhar



Madhu Sridhar

The MCSW is pleased to welcome **Madhu Sridhar** as one of our newest Commissioners. Madhu was appointed to the MCSW by the Senate President Theresa Murray. She is the President of the [Akshaya Patra Foundation](#), a non-profit organization that runs the largest school lunch program of its kind in the world for underprivileged children in India. It is dedicated to alleviating hunger and promoting education by providing free school lunches, currently to 800,000 underprivileged school children in India. The organization's mission is to end hunger and promote education by providing an incentive for children to come to school, stay in school, and provide them the necessary nutrients needed to improve their cognitive development and performance in the classroom. The goal of the organization is to feed one million children on a daily basis by the end of the decade.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation uses innovative state of the art technologies and efficient processes to produce nutritious school lunches in a short amount of time and cost effective manner. **It costs just \$28 to feed a child for the entire year.** For some children, this is often the only meal they receive the entire day.

Madhu served as the President of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts from 2003 to June, 2007. She is currently serving on the Community Advisory Board of WGBH and is an advisory board member for Andover Coalition for Education. She has also served on the ACLU Board. Her many accolades include the Tribute to Women Award from the YWCA-Lawrence in May 2005 "in recognition of her exemplary professional accomplishments and her compassionate service to others." She is a two-time recipient of "Citizens Who Care" award from the Rotary Club of Andover, being honored in both 1998 and 2001.

New Program Coordinator On Staff

At the beginning of August the MCSW welcomed Kim Sebastiao as our new Program Coordinator. Kim comes to us from the Women's Center of Rhode Island, a Providence-based domestic violence shelter and advocacy center where she served as the Public Relations and Special Event Coordinator for three years.

A 2002 graduate of Ithaca College, Kim studied Sports Information and Communication as well as Advertising, Public Relations and Corporate Communications. With several years of experience in planning women's appreciation events similar to our own Unsung Heroines initiative and promoting the activities of a women's organization, Kim's skills and experience are a perfect fit for the MCSW's needs.

"I am sincerely honored to have been selected for this position," Sebastiao said. "I am fortunate to have found a job so in line with my previous experiences and working for such an impressive organization. I am looking forward to getting started on the array of projects the Commission has set before me."



Kim Sebastiao

In addition to collaborating with Commissioner Cathy Greene on planning and coordinating the Unsung Heroines event, Kim will oversee the augmentation and promotion of the Massachusetts Women's Resource & Referral Network, produce *The Status Report*, manage a complete overhaul of the MCSW's website and coordinate any public relations efforts regarding the MCSW in general.

If you would like to contact Kim concerning any of the projects she will be handling, she can be reached at 617-626-6521 or Kimberly.Sebastiao@massmail.state.ma.us.

MCSW's Commitment to Pay Equity Continues

Those interested in women's wage equity had reason to celebrate on August 3rd, when the *New York Times* reported that young women in a number of major metropolitan areas are now making as much or more than their male peers. Those in the know, however, understand that despite this good news, the fight for equal pay is far from won. A part of that in-the-know group, the MCSW has spent the summer months hard at work advocating for and conducting research on the issue.

On July 26, Commissioner Ruth Bramson offered compelling testimony on "An Act to Authorize the HRD to Undertake a Study of the State's Job Classification System" (H2826) before the House Committee on Public Service. Bramson cited the success of similar legislation in closing the pay gap among state employees in Minnesota. Bill Sponsor Representative Alice Wolf also spoke in support of the bill.

Commission interns and staff have been researching the details of pay equity within the private sector in Massachusetts. In addition to making connections with groups that have conducted systematic or academic analyses on the situation, the MCSW has been reaching out to companies noted for their leadership in the realms of promoting diversity and maintaining a positive work environment. Throughout the summer, MCSW intern Eliza Buddenhagen (Emory University/Georgetown University) has been contacting these businesses to inquire about their diversity programs and discuss the issue of pay equity. This work has allowed the MCSW to better understand how these companies think about the issue. It has also served to put wage equity on the radar of these progressive companies, an important step towards a shift to businesses making the issue a priority. To this end, the Commission plans to reach out to newspapers and magazines that publish lists of "best companies," suggesting that they include organizations' pay equity records in their considerations.

Companies and organizations in the private sector that are interested in providing input regarding their current practices to this research are encouraged to contact the MCSW at 617-626-6520.

Those interested in the issue are encouraged to attend the Massachusetts Coalition for Women's Wage Equality's next meeting, to be held on **September 17 at 3:30 p.m. (Hurley Building, Room 307C)**. The Coalition, which includes representatives from more than a dozen local organizations, has many plans for the next year and is always looking for committed members to help carry them out. Please contact Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at 617-626-6525 for details on how you and your organization can get involved.

MCSW Seeks Fall Interns

The MCSW welcomes college and graduate students to intern for course credits! Currently the following internships are available:

Legislative Advocacy

Researching and monitoring state and national legislation that affects women; Supporting activities of the MCSW's Legislative Committee

Website Design

Creating new design for MCSW's website; maintaining integrity of the website with updates and edits

MA Women's Resource & Referral Network

Updating the MCSW's referral database; Outreach to organizations to build the referral database and to establish ongoing lines of communication

Fundraising

Researching potential sources of funding; Grant writing; Special events planning

If you, or someone you know is looking for an engaging and gratifying internship opportunity please call 617-626-6520.

Upcoming Events & Happenings

Wednesday, September 12 (10-11:30 a.m.)

Bill Hearing for S1281 - An Act requiring licensure and professional standards for the protection of consumers of a medical spa

State House - Room A-1 (Boston)

Monday, September 17 (3:30-5 p.m.)

MA Coalition for Women's Wage Equality Meeting
Hurley Building - Room 307C (19 Staniford St., Boston)

Wednesday, September 19 (3-5 p.m.)

Worcester Regional Council Meeting ~ Worcester City Hall (455 Main Street, Worcester)

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For a complete listing of events please visit

www.mass.gov/women/upcoming.htm.

Do you have an event that you would like listed in our monthly newsletter and/or on our website?

Please send the details to:

Kimberly.Sebastiao@massmail.state.ma.us.

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newsletter? If so, please contact**

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